

**Spiritual Power for Holy Living**

Scripture: Galatians 5:16–26

Code: 48-34

For this morning we come to Galatians chapter 5, Galatians chapter 5. This is just a wonderful chapter. There's not a lot of mystery about it. It's straightforward; it's clear; it's preeminently practical. It, at the same time, is very convicting; it's clear enough to be convicting. It's also eminently encouraging. So I want to read it for you, starting in Galatians 5:16, and reading down to verse 25.

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you're led by the Spirit, you're not under the law. Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.”

Now we're dealing with the very essence of sanctification, the very, very heart of Christian living, the Christian life. And our responsibility in the Christian life is summed up in verse 16: “Walk by the Spirit. Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.”

Now there's some very foundational reasons why this is critical, and I just want to remind you of them. We face a great challenge, because even though we have been justified, and even though we have been regenerated, and even though we're a new creation and we have a new life and new affections and new longings and new desires, the flesh is still there. We haven't yet reached our glorification; not until then will we be free from the sinful impulses that remain in our fallen humanity. So as believers in Jesus Christ, we need to very clearly understand the dynamics of what's going on in our lives. And I talk about that a little bit last week trying to give you an honest diagnosis of yourself, trying to do a little spiritual pathology to give you a look at what's really going on in your life as a believer. And what we came to understand is that there is a standard that has been set for us by God as to how we are to live as believers; and at the same time, we fight against our remaining humanness to even come close to that standard.

Now I want to remind you of the standard that God has set. It shouldn't surprise you, because in Matthew 5 our Lord put it this way: “Be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect.” Of course, God cannot set a standard lower than perfection. God who is absolutely holy, holy, holy will always affirm the absolute holy standard as His only acceptable standard. That is why we have to receive full righteousness from someone else, because we can't be justified by our own righteousness, the standard is too high.

And even in the matter of sanctification, living our Christian lives, the standard doesn't drop. Now that

you're a Christian God is not making suggestions, He's still making commands. The standard hasn't dropped. There is grace for us, there is mercy for us. We go to the throne of mercy to find that mercy, to find that grace in time of need. But the standard does not change; God's standard is still absolute holiness.

Now to set that in your mind, turn to 1 Peter for a moment, I want to show you a couple of passages, 1 Peter chapter 1. And here is Peter calling the believers to whom he writes to the standard that is the same for us and all believers. Verse 13 is a good place to start.

"Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit," – be sober-minded, means understand the divine priorities, have your divine priorities right – "fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Live according to divine priorities, and look for the day when we leave this world and enter into the presence of Christ.

Verse 14, in the meantime, "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'" And that is taken from a number of places in the book of Leviticus. "Be holy, for I am holy." God cannot set a standard lower than His own holiness.

He goes on in verse 17 to say, "If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth." We are to live in the fear of God. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. We are to pursue holiness at the very divine level.

Down in verse 22 we read, "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart." Now these two things sum up the command for the Christian: perfect love and perfect holiness. We are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, we are to love our neighbor as ourselves, and we are to be obedient to the law of God perfectly. That standard cannot be lowered.

If you go down to chapter 2 of 1 Peter, drop down to verse 9, we find very similar exhortation: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you have not received mercy, now you have received mercy.

"Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles," – or the nations – "so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation." Again the standard is the same. You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people that belong to God, and you are to proclaim by what you say and what you live, the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. This is a high standard.

Now on our own, we cannot attain to that standard. We know that, because in our flesh we have only the hope of disobedience and death. And yet this standard is established as the standard by which

we are to live. It is defined in another way that I think is very helpful and leaves no doubt what the Lord means. Listen to 1 John 2:6, “The one who says he abides in Him” – you say you belong to Christ, you abide in Christ, you’re one with Christ – “ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.”

There it is. You’re to live like Christ; that is the divine standard. You are called to holiness, to pure love, and to Christlike obedience; that is the standard. And because of that standard being so high and because of the weakness of our flesh, our only hope for coming anywhere near that standard is to walk by the Spirit – and that’s what we’re finding in Galatians.

If you go back for just a moment before we get to Galatians, to the chapter that I read earlier, Romans 8, you find in verse 3 these words: “What the law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh.” The reason the law can’t save anybody is because the law depends on human obedience, human potential, human ability. The law offers no help. The law does not empower anyone, it is weak.

In order to overcome that God sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh as an offering for sin, and condemns sin in the flesh. “God came, and in the form of Jesus Christ paid the penalty for sin, so that” – verse 4 – “the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” So he’s not talking about the fact that the righteousness of God, the law perfectly kept, was imputed to us, accredited to our account – although that is true. He’s not talking about our standing or our position, but rather he’s saying the requirement of the law can now be fulfilled as we walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. There’s the bottom line. The only way you can live the Christian life is in the power of the Holy Spirit. And I know that is sanctification 101, but it needs to be clearly understood.

If we are going to get anywhere near the standard that God has set, if we are going to please Him, if we are going to do the things that He wills as our Savior did, we have to have a power that is alien to us naturally; and that is why we have become the temple of God the Spirit. The Spirit of God has taken up residence in us. Your body is the temple of the Spirit of God. That is true of every believer.

Receiving the Holy Spirit is not subsequent to salvation, it occurs at salvation. First Corinthians 12 talks about the fact that when you are saved, Christ takes you by the power of the Holy Spirit, places you into the body, and then places the Holy Spirit in you to live in you. And as we’ve been learning in Galatians, if the Holy Spirit is in you, then the Father is in you, and the Son is in you as well as the Spirit, because God is one and indivisible. And the mystery of the Trinity is just this, that God Himself in His fullness dwells in every believer. This is why we can live the Christian life.

And now back to Galatians chapter 5 and verse 16: Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.” The only way that you overcome your fleshly desires is by walking in the power of the Spirit. And what did we say that means? One step at a time following the path the Spirit lays out. That is not some kind of emotional experience. It is not some kind of miracle. It is not having somebody hit you in the head and knock you flat; it is not that kind of thing. There are people who believe that if you’re going to be empowered by the Holy Spirit you have to speak in gibberish and fall down in a faint. Nothing could be more alien to the true work of the Holy Spirit than that.

What we’re seeing in the ministry of the Holy Spirit is simply this: you walk in the Spirit when you go

the path that the Spirit is moving in. And the path that the Spirit is moving in is the path of divine revelation, it's the will of God. So that's why we read, "Be filled with the Spirit," in Ephesians 5. And the parallel passage, Colossians 3, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." Same thing. So as the Word pours into your life and begins to control your behavior, under the power of the Word and by the power of the Holy Spirit, you walk in the way of the Holy Spirit. That's what it is. It isn't something miraculous, it isn't something you feel.

I can't honestly say that in my whole life I've ever felt the Holy Spirit's presence. I have never felt God's presence, I've never felt the presence of Christ; that is not something you feel with some kind of physical feeling. But what I know is that the Spirit dwells in me because I love the Lord. I love the Father, I love the Son, I love Holy Spirit, and that is alien to my fallen flesh. Not only that, I desire to worship God, to please God, to honor God, to serve God. I love the gospel, I desire to proclaim the gospel. I desire to see people saved by the gospel. I have the longing to love the Lord with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love others as I love myself. Those are the impulses that indicate the Spirit of God dwells in me.

And that is the essence of the Christian life. You're looking for not something abnormal, not something highly emotional, not something transcendent, but the normal pattern of your life is to desire to follow the impulses of the Holy Spirit as He illuminates the understanding of Scripture. If you don't understand the Word of God, if you don't know what the Word of God teaches, you're limited, because you don't know the path that the Spirit has laid out. That is why Jesus said, "You're sanctified by the truth; and Your Word is truth."

As you know the Word, as you are filled up with the Word, as the Word dominates your life, then the Spirit of God prompts you to move in the direction of what Scripture says. And if you do this for a long time as I have, you basically think biblically. I mean, your involuntary reactions are biblical. You're dominated by the Word of God. It isn't that you necessarily remember chapter and verse, but what happens is you have literally fed your soul on the propositional truths of the revelation of God to the point where you think biblically, which means you have the mind of Christ; and the Spirit of God leads you down the path of obedience to Him. So this is what it means to live the Christian life. It is to walk by the Spirit.

Now, in Romans 7, Paul says in verse 5, "While we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death." Here's the problem: when you're in the flesh before you're a believer, or if you're not a believer, you're in the flesh, the law doesn't help you. The law arouses sin. The law stirs up sin. The law incites new ways for you to be sinful. Instead of the law limiting your sin, instead of the law restricting your sin, the law exacerbates your sin. The more things you know that God forbids, the more things your fallen flesh longs for. So Paul says the law just aroused sinful passions.

Down in verse 8 he specifically says, "Sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the law sin is dead. Before I knew the law I didn't know much about coveting. Once I knew the law said, 'You shall not covet,' it excited coveting in me. This commandment, this good commandment from God, this law of God, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me." And verse 18, "I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh."

So what good is the law of God imposed upon a person who is in the flesh? It is of no use, it's not

going to produce righteousness. This is the fallacy, of course, of the Judaizers who had come to Galatia and said, “You can’t be saved unless you keep the law, and you can’t be sanctified unless you keep the law. If you’ll just keep the law God will accept you, and if you’ll keep on obeying the law” – in particular, they were talking about the external religious, ritualistic Mosaic ceremonies – “you’ll be sanctified. You’ll be saved and sanctified by means of the law.” And Paul’s answer to them throughout the book of Galatians is, “The law doesn’t save you the law doesn’t sanctify you. Your fallen flesh goes the opposite direction under the law. It literally finds more ways to sin.” Legalism doesn’t restrain the flesh, legalism unleashes the flesh and its lusts.

So, here’s the issue. The standard is high, and we are still fleshly. We have not yet received the redemption of the body, we still have our fallen flesh. And the challenge then is, “How do we live an overcoming life? How do we live a triumphant life? How do we live a joy-filled life? How do we get out of the deeds of the flesh, in verse 19 to 21, into the fruit of the Spirit?” That is the question.

And the answer is simply stated in verse 16 in the command: “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.” That, dear friends, is a statement of fact, a propositional statement of fact, and also a promise from God. That’s a promise: “Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.”

Yes, the flesh is powerful. It is so powerful that Paul says in Romans 7, “I find that I do things I don’t even want to do, and I don’t do things I want to do. I see two laws in me, two principles, two forces. One is the law of my mind which loves the Word of God, and the other is the law of my flesh, and they war against each other. And the only way that I can have victory is by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

So let’s go back then with that kind of foundation to Galatians 5 and look again at this very important portion of Scripture. The command, first in verse 16, “Walk by the Spirit, you’ll not carry out the desire of the flesh.” We spent a lot of time looking at that. And again, that’s how Christ lived His life; He walked in the Spirit. He limited Himself to the will of God and the power of the Spirit. That’s what His self-emptying was. That’s what the kenosis is, the incarnation. He set aside the independent use of His divine prerogatives and He did only the will of the Father only in the power of the Holy Spirit. That’s why in Matthew 12 when they said He was satanic, He said, “You’ve blasphemed not Me, but you’ve blasphemed the Holy Spirit,” because what He had been doing He had been doing in the power of the Spirit. So we have a command: “Walk by the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the desires” – or the lusts – “of the flesh.”

Now verses 17 and 18 go from the command to the conflict, and we looked at that. This is what we’ve been commenting on: “The flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.”

Now remember, I told you last week, the things that you please are the desires of the flesh. That’s just natural human pleasure, natural human desire. Your flesh wants what you want; your flesh wants what it wants. But you have been given the Spirit because the Spirit sets His desire against the flesh and is in opposition to what you desire. What an incredibly wonderful reality that is. How encouraging is that, that as a person who’s still human, you’re still in human form, you still have the flesh and all of its impulses, the Holy Spirit is there to restrain you from merely doing all the time what you please. And it’s not just by information in your head, it’s not just by data. It’s not just because you know something is right and something is wrong. It’s by virtue of supernatural power, supernatural power.

“When the Holy Spirit will come upon you, you shall receive power,” it says in Acts 1:8. And it’s not only power to proclaim the gospel, it’s power against the normal impulses of your fallen flesh. Unrestrained desire, lust comes up out of who we are. It starts in us.

Let’s go back to Mark 7. Our Lord is the one who initiated this kind of teaching when He taught in Mark chapter 7 on essentially what is probably the clearest definition in the Gospels of human depravity. Our Lord speaks – we’ll just pick it up at verse 20 of Mark 7. “And He was saying, ‘That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man.’” Jesus says, “It’s not what goes in you that defiles you, it’s what comes out of you.”

Back in verse 18 He said, “Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him?” Your problem is not outside of you, it’s where? It’s inside of you. All that is wretched and all that is evil comes out of you. You’re not a product of your environment, you’re a product of your nature. It’s not because you live in a bad neighborhood, it’s not because you had bad parents, it’s not because people have badly influenced you, it’s not because you’re living in a culture that overwhelms you with media, it’s because you’re rotten from the inside out.

You generate your own sin. You generate your own pollution. You’re living in the world, you’re not only putting off, what is it, 98.6 degrees into the world of heat, you’re also pumping into the world your own sin that comes from in you. You can run away and hide in a cave and you’ll take your sin with you. You could gather with other people in a monastery and try to cut yourself off from the world, and you just have a collection of sinful monks. You can’t get away from it, you can’t run from it; it’s in you.

So that which proceeds out of the man is what defiles the man. And then our Lord gives the list, very much like Paul, which is, no doubt, this is where Paul learned to do that. “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.” It all comes from the inside of us. We are sinful to the very core of our nature. We produce sin. We generate sin in a natural condition.

Now go for a moment to Romans 1, because this is another good illustration. In Romans chapter 1 we have that very important passage about the wrath of God that’s revealed in verse 18. It’s revealed against ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. So you not only are literally a manufacturing factory producing sin, but at the same time, you oppose God and you suppress truth.

So there’s the human condition. Sin is pouring out of this individual, and at the same time there’s a suppression of what is true and righteous; therefore God comes in judgment. And when that judgment comes the judgment looks like this, verse 24. Here’s the judgment: “God gives them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.”

When God unleashes His judgment on a culture or on a society, as He has on ours, one of the first things you’ll see is a sexual revolution. God turns them over to the lusts of their hearts to impurity to dishonor their bodies. Wherever you see a culture with a sexual revolution Romans 1 has been unleashed. Doesn’t stop there. Why did God do that? Verse 25, because, “They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator.”

There's a second step in God's wrath, verse 26: "God gave them over to degrading passions; their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural," – that's lesbianism – "in the same way men abandoned the natural function of the woman, burned in their desire toward one another," – that's homosexuality – "men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error." That's venereal disease that goes with it, including AIDS. So when God puts judgment on a society, you have a sexual revolution, followed by a homosexual revolution. This is normal human pattern. They reject God, and eventually the divine Judge lets them go down the path of their own sin.

The final step in judgment, verse 28: "They didn't see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind." What is a depraved mind? A mind that doesn't function. This is the insanity that has now gripped our society where you're a man and you think you're a woman, or where you're a woman and you think you're a man, where you think gender is fluid. This is insanity. This is a failure to acknowledge reality. Reality is what is, and you can't create your own reality.

But that's the insanity of the time in which we live. You'll have a sexual revolution, you'll have a homosexual revolution, and then you'll have insanity take over. And this is part of the judgment of God. And out of that insanity will come all kinds of things that the human soul produces, verse 29, "filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and though they know the ordinance of God that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them." You have a society that is completely unleashed in all these patterns of wretchedness.

Now look, it's enough that man manufactures sin, that people collectively in a culture then collectively manufacture sin. Maybe for a while they are restrained by some affirmation of God. But eventually when they turn against God, when they rebel against God, the wrath of God is unleashed; and then you have a full-blown sexual revolution, followed by a full-blown homosexual revolution, followed by the final step, which is a kind of insanity where we don't have any idea what's what in terms of human gender. That's insane; that's a depraved mind. And they want to teach that to five-year-olds: this is the world in which we live, these are natural human thoughts and actions. These are the deeds of the flesh.

Now let's come down to the third point here. The conflict leads us to the contrast. What is the contrast between the deeds of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit? We'll look just at the first one this morning.

"The deeds of the flesh" – verse 19 – "are evident:" – they are evident, they're clear to all of us – "immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities," – or hatred – "strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these." Things like these means to say this is not an exhaustive list, this is a representative list. This is a suggestive list. These sins are not hidden, we know them very well.

Now Paul divides the sins that he lists there into four categories. First category is sin that defiles the individual, the sin that defiles the individual: sexual sin. And for that he begins with immorality,

impurity, and sensuality. These are characteristic of every human being's evil desire. These are collectively characteristic of society. And when a society allows them to run amuck and rejects God, they are multiplied, and they are literally exponentially expanded by the fact that God's judgment is to pull back divine restraint and let the society become what it wants, sort of killing itself in an explosion of its own evil desire.

Well, let's talk about these words. The first word is "immorality," and that's the word *porneia* from which the word "pornography" comes. This word means any illicit sex, any kind of illicit sexual behavior. The root word originally, the verb, had to do with having a sexual relationship with a prostitute. But the word in ancient times expanded to mean any kind of sexual vice. It would be inclusive of adultery, premarital sexual activity, homosexuality, bestiality, incest, prostitution, pedophilia. Any and all sexually deviant behaviors are encompassed in this word "immorality." This is a work of the flesh, not a work of the Spirit.

There are people today who call themselves Christians who are living together as man and woman without marriage. That is the flesh, that is not the work of the Spirit. There are homosexuals who call themselves Christians and demand to be accepted in the body of Christ. That is not a work of God, that is a work of the flesh. Any kind of unholy sexual behavior. And what does that mean? Any kind of sexual behavior outside the relationship between a husband and a wife falls into the category of *porneia*.

In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul writes to the Corinthians and says, "It is reported actually that there's immorality among you," which tells us that this is not just in the world where, of course, it reigns supreme, but it makes its way into the church. "It is reported that there is immorality among you," – and what kind of immorality? – "such a kind that doesn't exist even among the Gentiles. Someone has his father's wife." Someone's having a sexual relationship with his step-mother. "You have become arrogant, haven't mourned, so that the one who has done this deed would be removed from your midst. You're tolerating a kind of sexual deviation in your church."

In 1 Corinthians 6, the next chapter, Paul writes, "The body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body." In verse 18, "Flee immorality. Flee immorality."

And, of course, in the familiar words of chapter 7, "Concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman to have her own husband." That's the only authorized place for sexual behavior to take place, and that's in a marriage. First Thessalonians 4, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that you abstain from immorality." So the flesh produces immorality. And the flesh is still hanging on, and sometimes this immorality, even to the believers, finds its way, as we saw in Corinthians, into the life of the church; and it has to be dealt with with firm church discipline.

The second word is the word "impurity, impurity," or "uncleanness," some of your translations might say. It's a Greek word, *akatharsia*. When we say something is a catharsis we means it's a cleanser. It's a purifier. *Katharos* mean "pure." *Akathartos*, when you put an alpha privative, an "a" at the front, it negates it.

Something that is *akatharsia* is the opposite of pure, it is impure, it is unclean. So this simply defines immorality by another word. It's not different than *porneia*, it's just another way to see it. It is illicit

sexual behavior, and it is in its own nature unclean. By the way, the word *akatharsia* is used to describe the puss leaking out of an open wound on a physical body.

Then the word “sensuality” is used, or “lasciviousness” is the old word. It’s *aselgeia*. *Aselgeia* means “with no restraint,” again an alpha privative at the beginning of it. It is without restraint, without limits, with no stopping point, the one who goes so far in lust and desire that there is no end to what the person will do. This is what the flesh produces. This is the flesh in action. It will defile the individual from the inside, and particularly do so in a sexual way.

Now, secondly, there are some more words here. They have not to do so much with the defilement of the individual, but the defilement of the individual’s relationship to God. And so we see, verse 20, “idolatry, idolatry.”

What comes out of the human heart? What comes out of the flesh? Idolatry. It twists and perverts one’s relationship to himself and makes him impure and unclean. It twists and perverts one’s relationship to the true God.

The flesh will make idols. The flesh will develop other gods. The flesh will make you worship something, someone, some event, some act, some experience, some hobby, some form of entertainment, more than you worship God. It chases you in the direction that is opposite worshipping God. This is as much, by the way, a work of immorality as immorality itself, because the greatest immoral act is to reject the true God. This encompasses any kind of false religion or any other idol that you might invent in your life, whether it’s a material idol, whether it’s some kind of goal in life, some kind of achievement, or some kind of object.

Now the flesh will distort your relationship to God in that way. And then he gives one other word to define this distortion in terms of God. He uses the word “sorcery.” The Greek word is *pharmakeia* from which your “pharmacy” is named. And your pharmacy is a drug-dispensing business. *Pharmakeia* means “drug.” And drugs were associated with ancient religion. Even primitive Indians had peyote that they could smoke, or something else. There were all kinds of shaman and witches and warlocks that were always dispensing potions of one kind or another, to say nothing of alcoholic drink; and that’s always ubiquitous in every culture, because things ferment, and it’s always readily available.

Drugs were used as a common medium in the practice of magic and sorcery and false religions to introduce people supposedly into the presence of the gods. They had to kind of get out of the normal thought patterns. And when they became inebriated or drugged, they were connecting with the deities, they thought. Aristotle and Polybius and the Septuagint used the word and connect it with witchcraft, because it was common for witches in the ancient world to use drugs.

This is what the flesh does. The flesh will chase you down the path of occult false religion; the flesh will send you that way. The flesh will cause you to want to distort your perceptions so that you can have a false idea that you’ve connected at a higher level, some transcendent level, even with some deity.

In the end of history as we come to the book of Revelation and we read about the horrors that are to come in the future when God’s judgment falls, it’s interesting what men don’t repent of. It says, “They

did not repent” – Revelation 9:20 – “of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and silver and brass and stone and wood, which can neither hear nor walk.” When God comes in final judgment at the time of tribulation, men don’t repent of their idols, and they don’t repent, verse 20, of their murders, nor of their drugs, nor of their immorality, nor of their thefts. And drugs is a big part of stimulating satanic religious experiences counterfeiting the true.

Thirdly, the flesh will not only corrupt your own life, it’ll corrupt your relationship to the true God. It corrupts all other human relations. And that’s where we get into the main list here; the most of these identifications are attributed to this category of human relations. Let’s look at them just quickly, we don’t have a lot of time.

“Enmities” is the first word, *echthra*. It means “hatred, hatred.” So what is natural to the flesh is for you to hate. That’s natural. Are you ready for that? That’s natural. You may find some people that you love: your children and your spouse and family. But basically the flesh hates by nature. It’s the opposite of love; and this word has the idea of hostility. It’s a kind of hate that is hostile. And by the way, it’s a plural use of the word, so it’s “hatreds.” We are marked by all kinds of hatreds. There are hatreds at every level and for almost every occasion.

As a result of those hatreds, the flesh is marked by “strife,” *eris*. Means “quarreling,” “fighting,” “bickering,” “rivalry.”

We are also marked by “jealousy,” *zēlos*. This is actually anger. This is anger produced by hate, anger exacerbated by fighting, quarreling, arguing, strife.

And, finally, “outbursts of anger.” All four of those have to do with anger. And the outbursts of anger is just one word in the Greek, it’s *thumos*. But *thumos* doesn’t mean smoldering anger, it means exploding anger; and the translators did us a favor by using the word “outburst” to describe it.

So what is natural to you? What is natural to you is, and to me, and to all human beings: immorality, impurity, sensuality, to destroy our own lives with immorality, to destroy our relationship to God with idolatry and things that are associated with idolatry. And then to destroy all of our human relationships with hatred, strife, jealousy, and exploding wrath. That’s not all. That, of course, generates the way most people live their lives, with disputes, dissensions, factions, and envying.

This is human life. This is human life, it just never goes away. World War II ended, and everybody was so happy that peace had come to Europe. It hadn’t come to Europe. There was massacre of millions of people post World War II, slaughtered just because of their ethnicity. Germans who had scattered all around Europe and were not a part of Hitler’s army, and had occupied all kinds of countries in Eastern Europe, were either slaughter and sometimes lying down on the road face-down, they were run over by large trucks, or they were shipped out by the millions back to Germany. Germany had a refuge problem that was beyond comprehension.

This is natural human flesh, and what happens is life is characterized by disputes, by dissention, by factions; and that’s where dissention crystalizes into a group, crystalizes into an organization, crystalizes into some institution and the ever-present envy. So that’s life in the world. That’s what happens with the flesh; that’s what it does, that’s what it produces. And really what we try to do is figure out ways to survive all this, right, so we don’t kill each other.

And the flesh will also defile relations to even objects. And the illustration he gives is of the fruit of the vine that becomes fermented, verse 21, “drunkenness.” This is excessive indulgence connected to reveling or carousing, public orgies, like those at the Temple of Bacchus. This is what the flesh produces. And these are only samples, “things like these.”

You know, humanity is ugly. We live on the brink of all of this constantly, constantly. And apart from the gospel and apart from the power of the Holy Spirit, this is where people live. It’s little wonder that they hate the Bible. Little wonder that they hate the gospel. We’ve normalized all these things. We have literally tens of thousands of establishments where you can go and get drunk and carouse, and you can do it just about any style you want. Fights and anger and wrath and jealousy and hatred are legitimized in our culture; and people who have those kinds of attitudes are turned into heroes in the media. You can worship anything and everything but the true God in our society and be accepted. And our society is dominated by immorality by every kind.

This is what the flesh produces, and it ends in verse 21. Paul says, “I forewarn you now, I’m telling you now, and I’ve told you before, those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” That’s absolute. It is not what you profess, it is how you behave. That’s why the Bible says men are going to be judged on their works, because their works are an evidence of their nature, if that’s what you do. Notice at the end of verse 21, “those who practice such things,” in an unbroken pattern is the intention.

Those whose lives are marked by these things, they’re not in the kingdom, they’re not God’s children, they’re not on the way to heaven. People who do that fall into the category of 1 Corinthians 6:9, “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.” People who behave like that are on their way to hell.

I close with a couple of passages in 1 John, if you’ll just look at it for a minute, 1 John. We’ll just look at one, chapter 3, verse 4: “Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. You know that He” – Christ – “appeared in order to take away sins.”

Now let me remind you of that. He appeared not only that you might be justified, but that you might be converted; not only that you might have the righteousness of God imputed to you, but that sin might be taken away from your life. What happened when you became a believer was He took sin away, not only the guilt of sin forensically, but the power of sin really.

He took sin away; and you know that He appeared to take away sins. So verse 6, “No one who abides in Him sins;” – or goes on sinning – “no one who goes on sinning has seen Him or knows Him. Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.” Yes, He came to take away sin, to destroy the works of the devil, which are the only works that an unbeliever does. Verse 9: “No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides him. He cannot go on sinning, because he’s born of God.”

Sum of this, the summary, “By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.” So if your life is marked by the deeds of the flesh, you are in the flesh, you are not in the kingdom of God. Kingdom people, while they struggle with those things that are of the flesh, walk in the direction of the Spirit by the power of the Spirit and the blessing a regenerated heart. Christians will sin, but the course of their life is the pattern of righteousness. I’ve often said it this way: it’s not the perfection of your life, but it is the direction of your life.

All this is the work of the Holy Spirit. If you were left to your own flesh, you couldn’t please God, even if He gave you the law. This is what’s so stupid about legalism. You can give this person who is completely under the control of the flesh all the laws of morality and religion that you want, but they don’t have the power to keep any of them, because the flesh is weak, and the law gives no power at all. The only way we can ever do what is right is when we have the Holy Spirit in us.

So that is what the flesh produces. On the other hand, the Spirit restrains that so that we don’t just do what the flesh wants, but we do the will of God. And we’ll look at that and fruit of the Spirit next Sunday.

Father, we’re so grateful again this morning for blessed fellowship and worship time. We enjoy joys of friendship, family, communion with one another, the hearing of the Word, singing, praying, being ministered to. This is the high point of our life, this is a taste of heaven for us. This is where we want to be, because this is the longing of our heart. We love You. We want to love You with all our powers. We want to love each other. We know You’ve enabled us to be obedient, because You’ve given us Your Spirit. Your Spirit has shed the love of God in our hearts, so that we can obey and we can love.

Lord, may we be faithful to walk by the Holy Spirit, following His path as laid out in the Word of God. Lead us in the direction of increasing righteousness, decreasing frequency of sin. This is why You came. This is the joy of the Christian life, as we go from one level of glory to the next, increasingly like the Lord Jesus Christ. Lord, do Your work in every heart here, every life. Accomplish Your good purpose, for Your glory, we pray. Amen.

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